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Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR

No. 2 SANITARY AREA

DEVON

1947

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Annual Report
for No. 2 Sanitary Area for 1947,

comprising :—

AXMINSTER URBAN, AXMINSTER RURAL, HONITON BOROUGH, HONITON RURAL, AND SEATON URBAN.

DUNCOMBE STEELE-PERKINS, *Med. Officer of Health.*

To the Chairmen and Councillors for the District comprising No. 2 Sanitary Area.

I have much pleasure in presenting my Annual Report for 1947.

I propose this year to curtail my Report, owing to the heavy cost entailed in production, and to concentrate entirely on the progress made in my Area during 1947, but shall include for future reference the various statistics, such as Deaths, Births, Housing, &c., and which will be of great value to my successor, as I feel the time is approaching when I shall have to relinquish some of my duties, as I feel under the new National Health Scheme of 1946, very great changes are in store in the administration of the Health Services.

The outstanding feature of the year has been the entire absence of Diphtheria, not a single case having been notified to me. This, I have not the slightest shadow of doubt, being entirely due to the result of Immunisation. We now have a very large percentage of our population Immunised against this disease, and here I would like to express my deep thanks to the Private Practitioners who have co-operated with me, and Immunised a very large number of pre-School age children under the County Council Scheme, thereby affording a much larger area of protection than I can possibly give by my periodical Clinics in the large centres.

Another interesting absentee this year has been the complete absence of Opthalmia Neonatorum, and Puerpural Fever ; credit is here entirely due to the skill of our District Nurses, and great praise is due to them for their excellent work.

There were only five cases of Scarlet Fever throughout the whole Area, and these cases were so mild that it is extremely doubtful if they were, any of them, the true Scarlet Fever. However, they were notified as such by their Medical Attendant, and although the cases were seen by me, I had grave doubts as to their true type, but had to accept the Practitioners' notification. Personally I have not seen a true type of Scarlet Fever for a great number of years, not, in fact, since the old Hospital at Roncombe was closed down.

Housing has now got well under way, and great progress has now been made, and early in 1948 a large number of Houses will be completed, and the Tenants of Houses, which under modern standards would be condemned, are re-housed in decent surroundings, but unfortunately the moment one of these Houses are unoccupied it is immediately occupied by another family, who in a very short time make application for better housing conditions, and so the vicious circle goes on, and there seems no end to it. It is quite impossible

to close or condemn these Houses until such time as there are sufficient decent Houses to house the people, and that will be a great many years yet. I would add, however, that these conditions apply to mostly the Borough of Honiton and the Urban Areas, the Rural conditions are not so acute.

During the year I carried out my routine Clinics for Immunisation, with very good attendance at all Clinics I held.

Water Supplies. I still have to report very little progress towards the formation of the East Devon Water Board, but the Honiton Borough Council have been very helpful to the Honiton Rural District, in helping forward the Scheme to supply the villages of Offwell, Widworthy and Cotleigh from the Wilmington Supply, while Combe Raleigh is being supplied by the Borough of Honiton from St. Cyres. These two installations should soon be completed.

The scheme in the Axminster Rural Area to supply Musbury and neighbouring villages from the Pinhay supply is now making good progress, and I hope shortly to see these villages receive a supply of good water, which is most urgently required.

I would like to extend my grateful thanks to my Sanitary Staff for their close co-operation and splendid work during 1947.

AXMINSTER URBAN.

Area	667 acres
Population	2,528
Rateable Value	£19,220
Penny Rate produces	£77

Infectious Disease.

	1946	1947
Measles	0 cases	90 cases
Diphtheria	1 ,,	0 ,,
Whooping Cough ...	1 ,,	19 ,,
Scarlet Fever ...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Para Typhoid ...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Erysipelas ...	0 ,,	1 ,,
Pneumonia ...	1 ,,	0 ,,
Puerpural Pyrexia ...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Cerebro Spinal ...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Opth. Neon. ...	0 ,,	0 ,,

Deaths.

Number of Deaths registered from all causes :—

1946—(14 Males, 24 Females)	38
1947—(14 Males, 14 Females)	28

Live Births.

Number of Births registered :—

1946—(30 Males, 17 Females) and includes 5 illegitimate births	47
1947—(29 Males, 23 Females) and includes 1 illegitimate birth	52

Still Births.

Number of above registered :—

1946—(1 Female registered)	...	...	1
1947—(2 Males registered)	...	...	2

Deaths of Infants under 1 year.

1946—Nil Deaths were registered.
1947—3 Deaths were registered.

Immunisation. Clinics for Diphtheria Immunisation have been held regularly at the Axminster School, and been exceedingly well attended, especially amongst children of pre-school age, while a very large number of children have been Immunised by their own Doctors under the County Council Scheme for pre-school age children.

With the exception of Measles and Whooping Cough, your District has been wonderfully free from any Infectious Disease, and I am sure you will note with great pleasure that no cases of Diphtheria were notified during the year.

Water Supply and Sewerage.

The Engineers are dealing with the preparation of Schemes for water and sewerage, but I still am of the opinion that a Joint Water Scheme is the solution to Axminster's troubles ; if it was not for the augmentation of water from the Rural supplies, Axminster in a dry season would be in a very serious position.

Deaths.—The number of Deaths registered was 28, as against 38 in 1946, and the causes of death were as follows :—

Tuberculosis to Respiratory System			...	3
Influenza	...	...	...	0
Cancer	...	...	...	2
Intra-Cranial Vascular Lesions			...	5
Heart Disease ...		...	...	7
Bronchitis	...	...	...	2
Pneumonia	...	...	...	2
Nephritis	...	...	...	1
All other causes		...	...	6

Births.—The Births show a slight increase, 52 births as against 47 in 1946, and I have to record 1 illegitimate birth.

Housing.

There are still a very large number of applicants for Houses, and at the end of 1945 there were 260 applicants. The following Houses had been completed up to December 31st, 1947 :—

Permanent Houses, 24 ; Temporary Houses, 11 ; Under Licence, 7.

The programme for building is now well under way, and a large number of Houses should be completed by the end of 1948.

AXMINSTER RURAL DISTRICT.

Area	... ...	51,468 acres
Population	... ...	10,970
Rateable Value	...	£50,813
Penny Rate produces	...	£206
No. of Parishes ...	...	14

Infectious Disease.

The following cases of Infectious Disease were notified in 1947 :—

		1946	1947
Measles	... ...	5 cases	90 cases
Pneumonia	... ...	7 ,,	2 ,,
Diphtheria	... ...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Whooping Cough	...	11 ,,	49 ,,
Scarlet Fever	...	6 ,,	4 ,,
Erysipelas	... ...	1 ,,	1 ,,
Typhoid	... ...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Puerpural Pyrexia	...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Cerebro Spinal	...	0 ,,	0 ,,

Deaths.

1946—(83 Males, 73 Females) 156
1947—(86 Males, 106 Females) 192

Live Births.

1946—(103 Males, 97 Females) 200
13 illegitimate births were registered and are included in the above total of 200.
1947—(101 Males, 92 Females) 193
6 illegitimate births were registered and are included in the above total of 193.

Still Births.

1946—6 Still Births were registered (0 illegitimate).
1947—2 Still Births were registered (0 illegitimate).

Deaths of Infants under 1 year.

1946—7 Deaths were registered (6 legitimate and 1 illegitimate).
1947—6 Deaths were registered (all legitimate).

Infectious Disease.—With the exception of Measles and Whooping Cough, Axminster Rural District has experienced one of the best years for absence from major Infectious Disease since I have been Medical Officer of Health, the four cases of Scarlet Fever were so mild in type they were hardly worthy of the name.

One outstanding point is again the absence of any cases of Diphtheria, and we have now gone several years without a case, this is due, I am perfectly certain, to the systematic Immunisation of the children.

Clinics were held regularly and very good attendances recorded, also a very large number of pre-School age children were done by their own Doctors under the County Council Scheme.

Deaths.—These remain about the average for the District, 192 as compared with 156 in 1946.

The chief causes of death in the Area were :—

Diabetes ...	3
Whooping Cough	0
Tuberculosis of Respiratory System ...	0
Cancer	29
Influenza	1
Intra-Cranial Vascular Lesions ...	28
Heart Disease	66
Other Diseases of Circulatory System ...	4
Bronchitis	13
Pneumonia	6
Appendicitis	2
Other Digestive Diseases	3
Nephritis	5
Premature Birth	1
Con. Mal., Birth Injuries, Infant Disease	4
Suicide	2
Other Violent Causes	4
All Other Causes	21

Births.—These remain about average, 193 as against 200 in 1946, and include 6 illegitimate births.

Water Supplies.

The following extensions have been completed during 1947 :—

1, Hawkchurch ; 2, Rocombe ; 3, Yawl Hill ; 4, Coaxdon ; 5, Dalwood ; 6, Chardstock.

It is now hoped to have the scheme for the supply of Musbury, Whitford and Kilmington, started in the very near future. These villages are in a desperate plight for water, and I do hope that before the end of 1948 their anxieties as regards water will once and for all be settled. The water, which is of first-rate quality, will be supplied by the Lyme Regis Water Coy.

The question of whether we are to have a Regional Water Board still hangs fire, and although this scheme from the Lyme Regis Water Coy. can be linked up with any Regional Scheme, yet for all concerned, and with some idea as to the future, it would be much better if we knew whether the Ministry is going forward with an East Devon Board. Once this is definitely settled, one could easily plan for the future of the Area ; now we hardly know where we are and how to proceed for the best. Small individual schemes for each village are very expensive, not only in formation of such schemes, but in upkeep, necessitating extra staff to look after the individual schemes, and as a rule, the springs run dry just when the water is required most.

Sewerage.

The Engineers are dealing with the preparation of schemes for Beer, Kilmington, Musbury and Whitford. They will all be very expensive schemes, but all are most urgently required, especially Musbury and Kilmington, which should take the greatest of priority.

Stockland. An extension to the Sewer has been completed.

Housing.

Very good progress has been made with our building programme. At December 31st, 1947, the following had been completed :—

Permanent Houses	...	28
Under Licence	...	17

A large building programme is under way, and by the end of the year we should have broken the back of the Housing shortage.

HONITON RURAL DISTRICT.

Area	...	...	61,265 acres
Population	...	...	6,892
No. of Parishes	...	...	22
Rateable Value	...	...	£25,861
Penny Rate Produces		...	£106/1/8

Infectious Disease.

As you will observe by the following Chart, Honiton Rural District has been almost entirely free of major Infectious Disease.

We had, however, a rather bad outbreak of Measles and Whooping Cough, which was prevalent everywhere.

I am very glad to report that almost for the first time on record Diphtheria has been entirely absent, no cases having been reported, also no cases of Opthalmia Neonatorum or Puerpural Fever have been reported to me.

		1946	1947
Scarlet Fever	...	2 cases	1 cases
Diphtheria	...	2 ,,	0 ,,
Whooping Cough	...	30 ,,	25 ,,
Measles	...	16 ,,	71 ,,
Pneumonia	...	6 ,,	2 ,,
Erysipelas	...	3 ,,	2 ,,
Puerpural Pyrexia	...	0 ,,	0 ,,

Immunisation.—Clinics held have been very satisfactorily attended.

Deaths.

Number of deaths registered from all causes :—

1946—(53 Males, 37 Females)	...	...	90
1947—(46 Males, 53 Females)	...	...	99

Live Births.

Number of Live Births registered :—

1946—(69 Males, 50 Females) 119

The number of illegitimate births registered was 8, and are included in the above total of 119.

1947—(63 Males, 50 Females) 113

The number of illegitimate births registered was 3, and are included in the above total of 113.

Deaths of Infants under 1 year.

1946—5 Deaths were registered (3 Males, 2 Females) including 1 illegitimate.

1947—6 Deaths were registered (2 Males, 4 Females) including 1 illegitimate.

Still Births.

1946—Number of Still Births registered was 4 (1 illegitimate).
1947—Number of Still Births registered was 3 (1 illegitimate).

Births.—These show a decrease, 113 as compared with 119 in 1946.

Deaths.—The number of Deaths registered were 99, as compared with 90 in 1946. The chief causes of death were :—

Tuberculosis	4
Cancer (all forms)	16
Intra-Cranial Vascular Lesions ...	17
Heart Disease	27
Other Diseases of Circulatory System ...	4
Bronchitis	3
Pneumonia	1
Appendicitis	1
Ulcer of Stomach or Duodenum ...	1
Other Digestive Diseases	1
Nephritis	4
Other Maternal Causes	1
Premature Births	3
Con. Mal., Birth Injuries, Infant Disease	2
Violent Causes	6
All Other Causes	8

Water Supplies.

We are still awaiting a decision on the Regional Scheme, and in the meantime it has been necessary to carry out several smaller Schemes, which expense could have been obviated if there had been a little more decisive action over the Regional Scheme. In fact, very little progress has been made in this all-important and vital development for the Area. However, there is one bright spot, and that is sanction has been obtained for the Regional portion for supplying Offwell, Cotleigh and Wilmington, and this should very shortly materialise. Supplies will be obtained from the Borough of Honiton (Wilmington source). Also Local supplies have been provided at Luppitt and Awliscombe, and Combe Raleigh has been linked up with the Borough supply at St. Cyres. Village schemes have also been prepared for Gittisham, Dunkeswell and Sheldon, and a scheme utilising the Air Ministry supply at Branscombe has been drawn up, and will be the subject of an inquiry. I think the majority of these, and other local schemes projected, could all have been obviated, and a great deal of money saved if the Regional Scheme had been adopted in the first instance.

Routine sampling of all water supplies have been carried out, and in the main, were satisfactory.

Sewerage.

Now Council Houses have had their Water Supplies improved, and in many instances flush lavatories installed, the question of Sewage disposal has arisen in an acute form. The original disposal sites at Monkton, Wilmington, Yarcombe, Awliscombe and Payhembury have been found to be most unsatisfactory. When originally built, they were in the most part never intended for flush lavatories, and we now have to provide Aerobic treatment at these sites, which have been approved by the Ministry.

Housing.

The Council's first Post-War Housing programme was completed in 1947 apart from Dunkeswell, Gittisham and Branscombe, although Branscombe has been started this year. The second scheme is in course of consideration by the Ministry of Health.

Permanent Houses completed Dec. 31st, 1947 ...	30
Under Licence	6

HONITON BOROUGH.

Area	3,134 acres
Population	3,367
Rateable Value	£28,949
Penny Rate produces ...	£119 0s. 0d.

Deaths.

Number of Deaths registered from all causes :—

1946—(19 Males, 21 Females)	40
1947—(19 Males, 26 Females)	45

Live Births.

Number of Live Births registered :—

1946—(22 Males, 23 Females) 45
4 illegitimate births were registered, and are included in the above total of 45.

1947—(35 Males, 33 Females) 68
2 illegitimate births were registered, and are included in the above total of 68.

Still Births.

1946—2 Still Births were registered.
1947—4 Still Births were registered (1 illegitimate).

Deaths of Infants under 1 year.

1946—2 Deaths were registered (both legitimate).
1947—2 Deaths were registered (both legitimate).

Infectious Disease.

The following cases were notified in 1947 :—

	1946	1947
Scarlet Fever ...	1 cases	0 cases
Diphtheria	0 ,,	0 ,,
Whooping Cough ...	10 ,,	7 ,,
Measles	4 ,,	18 ,,
Erysipelas	1 ,,	0 ,,
Pneumonia	2 ,,	2 ,,
Puerpural Pyrexia ...	0 ,,	0 ,,

The health of the Borough has again, like 1946, been exceptionally good, and has been marked by an entire absence of any cases of Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever. A few cases of Measles and Whooping Cough occurred in the early Spring, but beyond that we have a record which is almost unsurpassed.

I would point out that for the third year in succession no cases of Puerperal Fever have occurred, and this terrible disease of childbirth has now practically disappeared for some years. This is entirely due to the excellence of the District Nurses, who in the main do all the Midwifery in the district.

Immunisation. I have continued my Clinics at the Schools, and have been rewarded at each Session by excellent attendance of parents with their children, all eager to have their children done. The results, I think, speak for themselves; we have now been two years without a case of Diphtheria, so very different from the old days, before I commenced Immunisation; I cannot stress too forcibly the necessity of all parents having their children Immunised.

Deaths.—The number of deaths registered were 45 as compared with 40 in 1946. The chief causes of death were :—

Cancer	3
Other Diseases of Circulatory System ...	1
Intra-Cranial Vascular Lesions ...	10
Heart Disease	17
Bronchitis	5
Pneumonia	0
Nephritis	2
Digestive Diseases	3
Con. Mal., Birth Injuries, Infant Disease	1
Suicide	1
All Other Causes	2

Water Supplies.

I cannot add very much to my previous reports on the Borough supplies, which are now more than sufficient for all purposes, and after the Borough wants have been supplied, leave a vast surplus of water for our neighbours.

The scheme to supply Offwell, Wilmington and Cotleigh from the Borough supplies at Wilmington have already received the sanction of the Ministry, and the work of supplying these villages should very shortly be put in hand.

Also Combe Raleigh is now supplied from the Borough supplies at St. Cyres, and is a great boon to the village.

Drainage and Sewerage.

Sewerage Works. A considerable amount of oil from Garages is still being allowed to enter the main drains of the Borough. This oil considerably decreases the activity of the bacteria, rendering the works at times inefficient.

Naturally, it is very difficult to trace the sources of this pollution, and one can only appeal to the owners to take stringent precautions to prevent this.

Housing.

Great progress has been made in the building of new Houses, and the Borough can be really satisfied with their efforts. The great snag in the whole Housing Scheme is, that at the moment we shift a family to a Council House, there are a dozen or more applicants waiting to jump into the vacated house. Many of these are quite unfit to live in, and after a few months they in turn ask for better accommodation, on the grounds that their house is unfit to live in. These houses should be closed down when a family is moved, but until more accommodation is provided I am not disposed to ask for a house to be condemned, and so this vicious circle goes on, and there seems to be no end to it.

If private enterprise was only allowed to operate in the Borough there would soon be an end of the Housing problem.

I append the position of the Housing situation as at Dec., 1947 :

Permanent Houses completed		...	3
Temporary	...	...	12
Under Licence	...	...	8

SEATON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Area	...	...	1,190 acres
Population	...	...	2,919
Rateable value		...	£31,766
Penny Rate produces		...	£129/0/0

Deaths.

Number of Deaths registered from all causes :—

1946—(21 Males, 29 Females)	...	...	50
1947—(25 Males, 34 Females)	...	...	59

Live Births.

Number of Live Births registered :—

1946—(12 Males, 21 Females) 33
2 illegitimate births are included in the 33 registered.

1947—(28 Males, 17 Females) 45
1 illegitimate birth is included in the 45 registered.

Still Births.

1946—1 was registered.
1947—2 were registered (1 illegitimate).

Deaths of Infants under 1 year.

1946—2 were registered.

1947—1 was registered.

Infectious Disease.

The following cases were notified during the year:—

		1946	1947
Scarlet Fever	...	0 cases	1 cases
Puerpural Pyrexia	...	0 ,,	0 ,,
Whooping Cough	...	20 ,,	10 ,,
Measles ...	...	6 ,,	19 ,,
Pneumonia	...	5 ,,	4 ,,
Acute Poliomyetitis	...	0 ,,	1 ,,
Diphtheria ...	...	0 ,,	0 ,,

With the exception of Measles and Whooping Cough, which were prevalent in the Spring of the year, Seaton still maintains its high record of freedom from major Infectious Disease.

There was one case of Scarlet Fever and unfortunately one case of Infantile Paralysis. This latter was of a very severe type, and occurred in a young girl working in a Bank at Axminster, but living at Seaton. This was the only sporadic case occurring in the whole of No. 2 Area, and we were very fortunate in escaping the wave of Infantile Paralysis, an outbreak of which occurred all over the British Isles. It was quite impossible to trace the source of infection, and every possible step was taken to prevent any further spread, and to do everything possible for the girl. She was sent at once to Whipton Isolation Hospital, and from there to the Orthopædic Hospital at Exeter. She is making very slow progress to recovery.

Immunisation. Clinics have been held regularly at Seaton, with a fair response, but my information is that a large number of parents take their children to their private Doctor; also a large number avail themselves of the County Council Scheme, whereby the parents have the child done by the family Doctor, if of pre-School age, and the fee is paid by the County Council.

Deaths. The number of deaths registered from all causes were 59, as compared with 50 in 1946. The causes of death were:

Tuberculosis	2
Influenza	1
Cancer (all forms)	8
Diabetes	1
Intra-Cranial Vascular Lesions ...	6
Heart Disease	24
Bronchitis	2
Pneumonia	1
Nephritis	4
Con. Mal., Birth Injuries, Infant Disease	2
Violent Causes	4
All Other Causes	4

Water Supplies.

As I have reported before, in normal times Seaton has just about sufficient water for her purposes, but with any large building programme in the future, Seaton will have to seriously consider augmenting her supplies.

Housing.

Progress has been very slow indeed, but the causes seem to be beyond the control of the Council.

The following Houses were completed up to December 31st, 1947:—

Permanent Houses	4
Under Licence	10

I hope 1948 will see an immense effort to get more Houses built. With 150 applications for Houses last year it is a very poor result, and I feel if only private enterprise was allowed we should soon overcome the Housing shortage in Seaton, but the powers that be do not seem to like private enterprise, and so our people have to go on living in unhealthy, overcrowded (and in some cases immoral) conditions.

Your obedient servant,

DUNCOMBE STEELE-PERKINS,

Medical Officer of Health.